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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the idea that the media "cause" or strongly motivate acts of terrorism. In an effort to refute this view the paper applies Kenneth Burke's dramatistic theory of communication to show that the motives and behavior of political terrorists can be explained without reference to the media coverage terrorism produces. The paper argues that terrorism would occur because of its symbolic and communicative values even if no media coverage were provided. Four assumptions are presented that have been refuted by existing research: (1) terrorists want a propaganda platform; (2) terrorists win sympathy for their causes; (3) coverage focuses on terrorists and their deeds; and (4) terrorism is contagious and the media spread it. The paper also contends that terrorism "causes" media coverage, and not the reverse. The approach advocated in the paper is effective in helping to formulate a theory of terrorism, because it helps in understanding terrorism, in predicting the forms in which it will appear, and in learning how to control it. The paper concludes that even though terrorism cannot be controlled, knowledge of the purposes it serves provides hope that it may be possible to avoid the radical estrangements that necessitate this violence, or at least find other forms for radicals' expressions of order. (Sixty-seven notes are included.) (MS)

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THE TERRORIST AND THE MEDIA:
PARTNERS IN CRIME OR RITUALS
AND HARMLESS OBSERVERS?

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THE TERRORIST AND THE MEDIA: PARTNERS IN CRIME OR RITUALS AND HARMLESS OBSERVERS?

Ralph E. Dowling, Ph.D.

> And when each day's "reality" is "dramatically" put together for us by enterprises that comb the entire world for calamities, conflicts, and dire forebodings, such a documentary replica of the arena confuses us as to the actual recipe of motives on which the world is operating.[1]

In the past decade and a half, the mass media of communication have been criticized for being a cultural wasteland (or too active in perpetuating culture), having a liberal (or conservative) bias, trivializing the important (or the reverse), and causing violent behavior in viewers--particularly terrorists. This paper explores the idea that the media "cause" or strongly motivate acts of terrorism. The suggestion of such a causal relationship apparently is made sincerely by government officials, media critics, and the public at large. In a poll of police chiefs of large American cities, 93% said they "believed live tv [sic] coverage of terrorist acts encourage [sic] terrorism." Consistent with this view, 87% of the police chiefs favored limiting or eliminating coverage of terrorism.[2] The chiefs' beliefs evidence both the prevalence of this perception in government circles and the correlation between belief in a causal relationship and support of limitations on media coverage of terrorism.

Local officials are not alone in these beliefs. Lawrence Eagleburger, a former undersecretary of state has said, "television simply has to come to grips with the fact that these terrorists do what they do, at least in part, because of the publicity" the media provide."[3] Henry Kissinger has suggested that "what the media ought to consider is not to carry anything including the terrorists."[4]

Academicians have given succor to calls for censorship by too willingly accepting the notion that terrorists do their dirty deeds in order to bask in the glory of the media or to use their notoriety to gain an outlet for "propaganda" expounding their ideologies. Laqueur believes "terrorists and newspapermen [sic] share the assumption that those whose names make the headlines have power, that getting one's name on the front page is a major political achievement."[5] Although they have reversed themselves since, Decker and Rainey once argued that speech communication scholars should attempt to explain terrorism "as an attempt to communicate radical ideological arguments to an audience."[6]

Media critics of every stripe have been anxious to criticize television in particular for its coverage of terrorism. The Columbia Journalism Review reported that "the most vigorous criticism of the networks was . . . that they played into the hands of the terrorists by giving them a forum for their views and demands."[7] Michael Novak editorialized that "television got out the story the terrorists wanted out."[8] Jonathan Alter thought the "disturbing question" about coverage of the hijacking of TWA flight 847 was "whether the press was prolonging the ordeal by in effect handing the terrorists a megaphone,"

so the terrorists "got exactly what they wanted out of the news media: a conduit for their demands."[9] John Lofton of the Washington Times finds it "undebatable" that "the networks allowed themselves to be used as a platform and a conduit for terrorist propaganda" and has demanded the networks produce the "compelling reasons" for such coverage.[10]

Public denunciations of media coverage of terrorist acts are common. Letters-to-the-editor and public opinion polls reveal a widespread opinion that coverage causes terrorism and that coverage ought to be curtailed, either voluntarily or by statute. This sentiment is not limited to the United States. A poll conducted in France found that 55% of those polled wanted the French media to speak "as little as possible" about French hostages being held in Libya "in order not to give publicity to the hostage-takers."[11]

The major purpose of this paper is to refute the idea that terrorism coverage causes terrorism. I shall refute this notion by applying Kenneth Burke's dramatistic theory of communication to show that the motives and behaviors of political terrorists can be explained without reference to the media coverage terrorism produces. I shall attempt to refute the claim that terrorist acts are caused or motivated by media coverage by presenting studies and arguments refuting key assumptions of that view.

I will not argue that media personnel have not made mistakes that hindered resolution of terrorist incidents, nor will I argue that terrorists do not enjoy coverage and respond to it. Rather, I will argue that terrorism would occur because of its symbolic and communicative values even if no media coverage were provided. In making

these arguments I must provide some qualifiers. First, I am not claiming universal generalizability. Some terrorist incidents--even those within the limited definition of terrorism I will utilize--may in fact be motivated primarily by the desire to receive media coverage. My argument is that the average incident of terrorism is a symbolic act performed for the satisfaction of terrorists themselves rather than for any mediated audience. Second, I am limiting my study to terrorist groups operating for political purposes. I am not speculating about the mentally ill or imbalanced person performing terrorism for reasons best determined by psychological experts, nor about the criminal performing terrorist acts for profit.[12]

Assumptions Refuted By Existing Research

Assumption #1: Terrorists Want a Propaganda Platform

A primary assumption of many who share the causal view is that terrorists commit terrorism to receive media coverage so that they can use the media to convey persuasive messages to the audiences reached by the media. This assumption is counterintuitive since it requires us to assume that terrorists are smart enough to know how to receive coverage but not intelligent enough to realize that they are incapable of persuading the mass audience. If, as the evidence suggests, terrorists obviously cannot succeed in persuading the audience reached, we must either assume they are too dull to know it (which is inconsistent with the view of their intelligence we have when we estimate their insightfulness in attracting coverage), or that mass persuasion is not their goal.

If terrorists are intelligent and they want to persuade the mass audience, they should by now know that media coverage of terrorism rarely includes detailed reporting of their goals or philosophies. Decker and Rainey's content analysis of media coverage of terrorism found that "the terrorist is not always assured that the cause will be explained in any detail, or that any sympathetic education of the audience will take place."[13]

Dowling has argued that the terrorists would have to be dim indeed if they were to believe that they could possibly accomplish mass persuasion through the presentation of persuasive discourse through the media channels gained by their violence.[14] First, the ideologies of the terrorists are so far removed from those of the mass audience that presentation of these messages is more likely to produce the well documented "boomerang effect"--in which advocacy of extreme positions causes a defensive reaction in audience members so that they end up more strongly opposed to the view than they were prior to the attempted persuasion.[15] If evidence of the distance between mass ideology and terrorist ideology is needed, terrorists' refusal to compromise with or to work within existing institutions is strong evidence of the vast ideological distances involved.

Secondly, the negative credibility produced by the very acts of violence without which media access could not be gained prevents mass acceptance of terrorist ideologies. Any of the existing theories of persuasion would predict that such low-credibility persuaders rarely get a fair hearing or achieve their persuasive goals. Thirdly, even if the extremist positions and negative credibility of terrorists were not

sufficient to guarantee failure in persuading the mass audience, the nature and form of contemporary media news coverage assures that the audience's most likely response to violent news is to be entertained in the same way it is by police shows and other violent entertainment pervasive in Western television.[16]

If terrorism produces any real effects, they are probably harmful to the goals of the terrorists. Gerbner and Gross have argued that television's preoccupation with violence--real and fictitious--tends to produce an exaggerated sense of fear and an increase in public willingness to rely upon authority for protection.[17] Willingness of the public to rely on centralized authority is not a goal of terrorism.

Some argue that left-wing terrorists want Western governments to overreact to terrorism so that the masses will perceive oppression, thus paving the way for the leftist revolution.[18] This, of course, has not occurred and is in no immediate danger of occurring. If terrorists want to create an overreaction, the violence itself--not its coverage or any resulting persuasive attempts--will create the necessary climate of fear among government officials.

Others argue that right-wing terrorists want to create a climate of fear so that the masses will clamor for the protection only strong leaders like themselves can provide.[19] While such terrorists might have a use for coverage and for public persuasion that they are the solution to public fear, the logistical problems of hiding their identities as the perpetrators may explain why no such groups are currently threatening media in the United States.

Violence, then, produces access to a medium of communication that terrorists cannot use successfully to persuade the audience reached. We can either conclude that terrorists are not astute enough to be aware of this, or that terrorists do not really want to use the media to convey persuasive messages to the mass audience.

Assumption #2: Terrorists Win Sympathy for Their Causes

Another common assumption of those holding the causal view of media coverage and terrorism is that coverage produces sympathy for terrorists and their causes. Hence, terrorism is caused by the desire to gain sympathy (not that produced by presentation of persuasive messages, but that produced by coverage). Corry put it this way:

> At the same time it [television] appears to come close to rationalizing terrorism. Television does not mean to do this, but it is implicit in much of the coverage. Show that Shiite Moslems are poor and deprived. Point out that a hijacking, say, or a bombing is a weapon of the powerless. Terrorism is not something just to be deplored, then; it is something to be understood. . . . Consequently, it has become difficult to regard terrorism as insane, immoral or criminal. Terrorism can be explained; it has a rationale. Moral disapproval gets lost. Meanwhile, the terrorists, or their surrogates, have access to the news broadcasts.[20]

The notion that people who randomly kill innocent victims would gain sympathy through media coverage is counterintuitive. The deadly and arbitrary deeds and alien ideologies of terrorists prevents audiences from identifying with terrorists. Whether we use research in attraction or in speaker credibility we cannot find satisfactory evidence that coverage of terrorists produces sympathy for them and their causes. Attraction research indicates that we are attracted to people who are in our proximity, who are physically attractive, who

are interpersonally similar to us and who provide us social rewards in our communication with them.[21] Terrorists appear to meet none of these criteria.

Credibility research shows that audiences are attracted to people who are perceived as trustworthy, competent, and dynamic. Terrorists certainly are unlikely to be perceived as trustworthy after their known criminal activities, unlikely to be perceived as competent since they hold such alien ideologies, and possess none of the positive charismatic traits associated with dynamism. That the negative credibility of terrorists actually reduces sympathy for their cause can be predicted by several theories of persuasion, most notably Heider's balance theory and Osgood and Tannenbaum's principle of congruity.[22]

Some limited evidence of Americans' regard for terrorists is found in a Newsweek poll taken shortly after Reagan's bombing of Libya as retaliation for terrorist acts. The poll found 71% of Americans approved of the bombing, hence evidencing little sympathy for terrorists.[23] In fact, as Falk reports, despite 71% approval for the bombing, only 31% thought the raid would reduce terrorism, while 39% thought it would increase terrorism and 23% thought it would have no effect. Given these beliefs, dislike for terrorists must be running very high indeed for so many to favor a bombing that most believed would increase or not affect terrorism.[24] As Falk further notes, this hatred is produced despite the fact that in 1985, only 23 Americans were killed by terrorism "about one-fourth the number who die each year as a result of being struck by lightning."[25]

The evidence, then, suggests that terrorists would have to be very dim indeed to believe that they have been winning sympathy from the coverage of their violence. If, then, the hope of winning sympathy is removed as a motivation for terrorists seeking media coverage we must seek alternate explanations.

Assumption #3: Coverage Focuses on Terrorists and Their Deeds

Media coverage of terrorist incidents is prodigious, but many critics have mistakenly criticized the coverage for focusing on the terrorists and their violence under the mistaken assumption that this gives terrorists the exposure they want. As we have already noted, research suggests terrorists cannot be sure that their causes will be explained in any detail or with any sympathy. Further, by Picard and Adams found that 83% of the characterizations of terrorism and terrorists offered by media personnel in covering terrorist incidents were neutral--they neither explicitly condemned nor praised the deeds or doers. Since these media-originated characterizations made up 94.3% of the total characterizations presented in the media, neutral coverage predominates, supplemented by strongly condemnatory characterizations attributed to government personnel.[26]

Picard's study of three major U.S. newspapers and television networks found that the predominant form of coverage was not of incidents or terrorists, but of government-related activities.[27] This may be consistent with Gerbner and Gross's hypothesis that the net effect of media's infatuation with violence is to produce greater fear and a greater public willingness to rely on authorities to control

violence, and is consistent with Sperry's depiction of media coverage of such stories as narratives telling hero stories in which "the world at peace is disrupted by some event (say, an act of terrorism). That event . . . is named and . . . analyzed and understood. It is then attacked by some leader, the hero figure, often a representative of the people."[28]

So, if coverage of terrorism does not focus on the terrorists, does not offer them as sympathetic characters, and tends to produce a greater reliance on existing authority, we must seek an alternate motivation for the terrorists seeking media coverage or we must abandon the assumption that they seek coverage.

ASSUMPTION #4: Terrorism is Contagious and Media Spread It

This premise often is held by those condemning media coverage of terrorism, but is separate from the others in that it does not say terrorists commit violence to receive <u>future</u> coverage, but rather that they commit violence because of <u>past</u> media coverage. Hence, I will not refute it at length. Rather, I simply refer to Picard's summary of this line of research in which he concludes, "that no causal link has been established using any acceptable social science research methods between media coverage and the spread of terrorism."[29] The evidence suggesting that terrorists get the idea to commit violence from the media and learn how to do violence well does not bear scrutiny. The existence of terrorism for hundreds or thousands of years before mass media existed suggests that media are not necessary for the existence of general or specific ideas of terrorism and how to commit it.

If, then, media coverage is not the cause of terrorism, another explication of their relationship is needed. I suggest that Burke's dramatistic theory explains the reasons terrorists commit violence without a causal role for the media. The media are but observers of the appalling but legitimately newsworthy acts that are not changed in their essence by the presence or absence of media.

Terrorism As Human Social Action

Burke's theory of social action is part of his "new rhetoric," which he identifies as a field emphasizing "identification" rather than "persuasion." This new rhetoric is important because rhetoric is inextricably tied to hierarchy--the principles and practices by which human societies are organized.[30]

The "old" rhetoric was the study of persuasion, tended to be atheoretical, and provided systems that could be taught easily. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."[31] To the ancient Greeks in their burgeoning "democracy," the art of persuasion was an important one that had to be taught quickly to a large number of men [sic]. Hence, the early study of rhetoric was pedagogically rather than theoretically oriented and could be considered grammatical. The "new rhetoric" is intensely theoretical, uninterested in oratorical pedagogy, and "may best be described as 'social' or 'sociological.'"[32]

This new rhetoric is interested in how people relate to one another in society through the use of symbols. Dance and Larson have noted, "human communication links people with other people. It is the

process through which social bonds are established and maintained, human relationships are defined, and almost all forms of social behavior are manifested."[33] The study of such pervasive and powerful phenomena is not the meaning normally associated with "rhetoric," but I hope by now that the definition of rhetoric as the study of "the uniquely human ability to use symbols to communicate with one another" does not come as a surprise.[34]

Analysis of terrorism should begin with an understanding that it is human action. I emphasize action to distinguish it from motion because humans alone can act, while things can but move. This realization forces us to examine the entire complex of motives that surround human action because of its inherently symbolic origins and interpretations. This realization is central to Burke's theories of human social action.[35] Burke's view is that human action is different than motion in kind because humans are "symbol-using animal[s]," homo symbolicum, and because the use of symbols for identification and communication makes human action unique.

Because humans act, Burke pointedly notes, his dramatistic approach is not a metaphor--it literally depicts human life. Burke's dramatism functions as a method for analyzing human relations and motives in acting. By analyzing human actions--including symbolic actions--we may understand how humans relate to one another and why they act as they do.[36]

Duncan, a sociologist disciple of Burke, has applied dramatistic analysis to the formation and operation of human society. The most basic proposition of Duncan's view of society is that "society arises

in, and continues to exist through, the communication of significant symbols."[37] Humankind forms societies as a means of resolving the conflict between individuals' physical estrangement from one another and their innate desire to bridge this estrangement by becoming "consubstantial" with and by "identifying" with others.

The formation of societies produces social orders "expressed through hierarchies which differentiate men [sic] into ranks, classes, and status groups."[38] These hierarchies--which relate people as superiors, inferiors and equals--are supported by "principles of order which are believed `necessary' to social integration."[39] The principles upon which the hierarchy is based are necessary in order to persuade people to accept their assigned roles in society--an exercise in persuasion. However, these principles contain the seeds of their own destruction. Principles of order give rise to commandments--the "thou-shalt-nots" which dictate appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The existence of commandments and the human inability to obey commandments produces a cycle:

> In sum:
> In the Iron Law of History
> That welds Order and Sacrifice:
>
> Order leads to Guilt
> (for who can keep commandments)
> Guilt needs Redemption
> (for who would not be cleansed)
> Redemption needs Redeemer
> (which is to say, a Victim!)
>
> Order
> Through Guilt
> To Victimage
> (hence: Cult of the Kill).[40]

Order, then is a motive for human behavior arising from "every individual's need to find a place" in the world. Order is hierarchical because it must identify these places and their relationships to one another.[41] The hierarchy must be persuasive to those living under it and it must command people how to live. But, since people cannot always obey commandments, Guilt arises. Guilt is individuals' realization that they have violated the "sacred" principles necessary to the society which has given them order and a sense of place.

Guilt becomes a motive as those feeling Guilt seek Redemption for their guilt. Redemption, however, requires the sacrifice of a victim. Expiating Guilt by doing harm to self Burke calls <u>mortification</u>. Sacrificing of a scapegoat other Burke calls <u>victimage</u>. Burke has noted that "the promoting of social cohesion through victimage is `normal' and `natural'" and not restricted to ancient or primitive societies.[42] The use of scapegoats has the "ability to establish social cohesion and . . . consubstantial identification." Hence, "victimage can be viewed . . . as a means of establishing order because it serves to unite a society against a common enemy."[43]

Victimage, then, is essential for producing, for the individual suffering from Guilt, "redemption, rebirth, or a new identity." According to Foss, Foss and Trapp,

> The rhetoric of rebirth . . . involves movement through three steps--pollution, purification, and redemption. Pollution is the initial state of guilt, an unclean condition of sins and burdens; purification is the step of cleansing or catharsis, where the guilt is sloughed off; and redemption is the stage of cleanliness in which a new state--whether physical, spiritual, or psychological--is achieved.[44]

Scott and Smith have noted that radicals may "work out the rite of the kill symbolically. Harassing, embarrassing, disarming the enemy may suffice, especially if he [sic] is finally led to admit his impotence in the face of the superior will of the revolutionary." This symbolic victimage provides rebirth for the radicals. Scott and Smith note, "by the act of overcoming his [sic] enemy, he who supplants demonstrates his own worthiness, effacing the mark, whatever it may be--immaturity, weakness, subhumanity--that his enemy has set upon his brow."[45]

Implicit in Scott and Smith's analysis is that radicals and terrorists are parts of societies. These are rebel societies with their own symbols, hierarchies, sacred principles, and need for redemption from guilt caused by violating these principles. Hence, Burke's analysis of society can be applied to terrorist societies, and when it is, I believe it explains why terrorists commit violent deeds and why they do so regardless of media coverage.

Terrorist Violence As Social Action

Societies exist in a state of flux because "social order is always a resolution of acceptance, doubt, or rejection of the principles that are believed to guarantee such order."[46] Society must provide us with "means to expiate guilt arising from disobedience," for "no society can survive unless symbolic resources are available for expiating guilt arising out of failures . . . to uphold principles of hierarchy believed necessary to survival of the group."[47] When people begin to doubt too much the reigning principles of order, "victimage passes into revolt," because even society's use of force "must rest on belief. The

victim must believe in his guilt and in the right of his executioners to punish him. . . . The revolutionary is an enemy, not a victim."[48]

Revolutionaries and terrorists, then, are people who can no longer expiate their guilt under the reigning symbols of social order. So, they form their own societies that allow expiation. Brandes has said, "one notable characteristic of the rhetoric of the first stage of a revolution stems from the revolutionary's need for identification because in the process of divorcing himself from the images of the past, he welcomes new symbols to restore his security."[49]

Seen this way, terrorism and revolution are no longer perceived as aberrations, but rather as simply another ordering of human society understandable in the same way as mainstream society. Terror and revolution only appear to be aberrations by the standards provided by the reigning principles upon which mainstream society is constructed. Looked upon generically as human social action, these otherwise inexplicable phenomena become understandable.

The violent deeds of terrorists are committed to provide the new social order they seek. Burke provides this illustration:

> With the evidence of the Crucifixion before us, we cannot deny that consubstantiality <u>is</u> established by common involvement in a killing. But one must not isolate the killing itself as the essence of the exaltation. Rather, one can account for the consubstantiality as arising from common participation in a notable, or solemn experience. Thus, we once saw the history of a human society in miniature, grounded in a rhetoric of primitive magic. Some boys, about ten years of age, had been playing in a vacant lot. They stirred up a rattlesnake, which the father of one boy killed with a hoe. They had their pictures taken, dangling the dead snake. Immediately after, they organized the Rattlesnake Club. Their members were made consubstantial by the sacrifice of this victim, representing dangers and triumphs they had shared in common. The snake was a sacred offering; by its death it provided the spirit for this magically united band.[50]

The killing and maiming done by terrorists, and the risks they take together are violent and dramatic attempts to form and maintain their new society together by proving their own worth in accordance with the principles of order of their society. The victimization of members of mainstream society is done to purify terrorists of guilt.

Duncan argues:

> For it is only by acting together under great community symbols that men identify and thus rid themselves of loneliness and despair. Men need each other in hate as well as love. . . . Men do not want to communicate <u>about</u> love and hate, but to <u>express</u> them in community with other men.[51]

Because "social relations are <u>dramatic</u> relations . . . men seek society, brotherhood, and love." But, they do so "through community dramas of guilt, redemption, victimage, and hierarchy." These dramas often involve the symbolic or actual killing of a scapegoat or enemy whose death purifies those involved in the drama. In explaining war as a normal part of mainstream society, Duncan wrote,

> In this sense, all wars are conducted as 'holy' wars. The enemy must be defeated not only to gain . . . any of the alleged 'rational' reasons for war, but because his defeat and punishment will relieve us of our guilt and fear . . . as we wound and kill . . . our love for each other deepens . . . our hatred of each other is being purged.[52]

Because "victimage is the basic form of expiation in the communication of social order," we should not be surprised to see terrorist societies using victimage to accomplish this purpose.[53] The seemingly senseless killings done by terrorists serve the same function for terrorist society that wars, punishment of criminals, exiling of dissidents, etc. perform for mainstream society. The repulsive form of victimage taken by terrorists is only repulsive <u>from the perspective</u>

of our society's principles of order. Mainstream societies are not immune from such "repulsive" rituals, as Duncan has observed:

> This model of victimage is familiar in our time. We turn in horror from Stalin's purges and Hitler's death camps, but we face the terrible revelation that victimage works. Man is a social beast of prey. He does not kill for food, but to achieve 'order' in society. Thus before we create models of social order which tell us what happens after or before conflict, . . . we must develop models which tell us something about what goes on during conflict.[54]

Terrorists sometimes seem conscious of their participation in the creation and maintenance of a new social order. Of his days with the Irgun, Begin has written about the use of victimage to remove the negative labels put on them by their enemies as discussed earlier by Scott and Smith. "The 'smear' with which our enemies and opponents tried to belittle us was to us a source of pride. People who had been humiliated and degraded became proud fighters in our ranks, free and equal men and women."[55] An anonymous writer for the RAF (Baader-Meinhof Group) wrote that becoming an urban guerrilla,

> Presupposes that one is . . . sure that the whole anti-Semite-criminal-subhuman-murderer-arsonist syndrome they use against revolutionaries, all that shit that they alone are able to abstract and articulate and that still influences some comrades' attitude to us, that none of this has any effect on us.[56]

Begin also talked about the "order" of Irgun society, writing that "a fighting underground is a veritable state in miniature: a state at war. It has its army, its police, its own courts. It has at its disposal all the executive arms of a state." Begin also provides this lengthy description of the Irgun that should be viewed as a reordered society operating under new symbols of order, here including a semitic

version of the "melting pot," and an order in which loyalty, ability, and a stomach for the fight were both required and universal.

> In the Shock Units and in all the divisions of the Irgun we had members who came from all Jewish communities and of all classes. We had people from Tunis and Harbin, Poland and Persia, France and Yemen, Belgium and Iraq, Czechoslovakia and Syria; we had natives of the United States and Bokhara, of England, Scotland, Argentina and South Africa, and most of all, of Eretz Israel itself. We were the melting-pot of the Jewish nation in miniature. We never asked about origins: we demanded only loyalty and ability. Our comrades from the eastern communities felt happy and at home in the Irgun. Nobody ever displayed any stupid airs of superiority toward them; and they were thus helped to free themselves of any unjustified sense of inferiority they may have harbored. They were fighting comrades and that was enough. They could, and did, attain the highest positions of responsibility.[57]

As opposed to the unity and society found within terrorist society, the enemy is to be regarded as something less than human and as something deserving of death. The killing of others who are like us is never as easy as killing others who are identifiably "them," and not "us." For, as Jenkins has observed, "As we have seen throughout history, the presumed approval of God for the killing of pagans, heathens, or infidels can permit acts of great destruction and self-destruction."[58]

The killing of innocents outside of terrorism's micro-societies is but one form of victimage available to terrorists. By risking their own lives in all-out armed confrontations with authorities, terrorists also can practice mortification. As Duncan notes, when "we cannot find easy outgoing relief or cannot project our guilt upon another [scapegoat], we circle back upon ourselves."[59] We can punish ourselves as an alternative way of expiating guilt, but this punishment must be on the terms of the reigning terms of social order. In terrorist

society, this may take the form of foolhardy risk-taking with one's life in a violent encounter with authorities or the martyrdom of a suicide mission.

Terrorists themselves, like Begin and the RAF, sometimes seem aware of the dramatic nature of what they are doing. Paraphrasing from the words of Al Fatah, Harkabi notes their belief that "Violence has a therapeutic effect, purifying society of its diseases." Al Fatah itself stated that its "violence will purify the individuals from venom, it will redeem the colonized from inferiority complex, it will return courage to the countryman." The casual reader of such a statement might take it as nothing more than the ludicrous stretching of a metaphor by an unbalanced mind. But, given Burke's framework and the appeal of this kind of rhetoric to terrorists, we can explain why it works and why terrorists practice violence. Speaking further of the redemption and purification provided by violence, Al Fatah stated in regard to Israel, "Blazing our armed revolution inside the occupied territory is a healing medicine for all our people's diseases."[60]

Hardman has noted that terrorists inevitably challenge the existing social order as a prelude to establishing a new one. The terrorists do so by showing that the existing social order does not rest upon sacred principles. Terrorism seeks to show "that constituted authority is no longer safely entrenched and unchallenged," and then goes on to show the "existing government as a usurper of the people's power or of the historic rights of a certain dynasty or class."[61]

In the most extreme case we can imagine, terrorists might construct a new social order around perpetual violence. Such a society

would have principles of order alien to any existing society and these principles might require perpetual violence--both victimage and mortification--in order for Guilt to be avoided and redeemed. This is the kind of social order I see operating in Miller's description of the renowned terrorist, Abu Nidal.

> In following Abu Nidal's trail over the past decade, one fact is unmistakable. The violence and terror he sows is not directed at any achievable political goal. While Abu Nidal pursues tactical ends--publicity, intimidation--he does not seek to use terror to achieve Palestinian rights or a state in his lifetime or even in that of his children. For him the struggle against Zionism and all of its supporters is timeless and continues without regard for accommodation, compromise, or negotiation. "The fact that the Zionists have taken my Arab homeland is for me more than a crime," Abu Nidal asserted last fall. "For me it would be a crime if we permitted the Zionist to leave our homeland alive." It is here, in a world of grievances that can never be addressed, of injustices that can never be righted and of unending vengeance that Abu Nidal operates--impervious and opposed to all forms of accommodation of moderation.[62]

That terrorism is an attack on the existing social order is not doubted by the leadership of the existing social order. I do not mean a physical threat, because terrorists are too weak and too unpopular to threaten existing institutions and the social order they perpetuate. Terrorists pose a <u>rhetorical</u> threat. Terrorism presents an alternative. Government leaders often respond to terrorism in just the way Burke would predict--they gather together some of the most powerful symbols and sacred principles of social order and use them to refute the terrorists' social orders.

American Secretary of State George Schultz aroused the principles and symbols of "the rule of law," "our morality," "courage," "democracy," "self-confidence," "individual rights," and "freedom" in a single essay on terrorism. Terrorists must be victimized to redeem

the Guilt aroused whenever terrorism is allowed to disrupt or threaten the cherished peace and tranquility promised by the existing social order. Schultz assured readers that "in this Administration our actions will be governed by the rule of law." But, "if terrorism is truly a threat to Western moral values, our morality must not paralyze us . . . and if the enemies of these values are united, so too must the democratic countries be united in defending them." Schultz went on, "if we truly believe in the values of our civilization, we have a duty to defend them. The democracies must have the self-confidence to tackle this menacing problem. . . . We must confront the terrorist threat with the same resolve and determination that this nation has shown time and again." While fighting the battle against terrorism might get a bit messy, "we must always keep in mind the values and way of life we are trying to protect. Clearly, we will not allow ourselves to descend to the level of barbarism that terrorism represents."[63]

The Role of the Media in Terrorist Violence

The motives for terrorist violence explained above do not leave much of a role for the media in "causing" or motivating terrorist violence. The violent terrorist is a social creature seeking his/her own satisfying social symbols, purifying his/her guilt, and removing unsatisfactory identifications put on him/her by the enemy society by striking out at those deemed to be enemies. By "killing" the enemy--either physically or symbolically--the terrorists are enacting "social dramas through intensive and frequent communal presentations of tragic

and comic roles whose proper enactment is believed necessary to community survival."[64]

These purposes are served for the participants by their participation, not by media coverage of the violence or threatened violence. The "audience" that is reachable by this kind of ritual drama is an audience composed of those who already have rejected the reigning symbols of order and who are part of radical/terrorist society. This audience is not a major segment of the audience attending to mass media channels in the West. Rather, these people are what Dowling has called the "insiders"--those already committed to the cause.[65] These people can be brought to share in the ritual by word of mouth, by prior rehearsal with participants, and by channels other than the Western mass media.

So, what I am ultimately arguing is that terrorism "causes" media coverage, and not the reverse. The violent nature of terrorism is merely another form for expressing the victimage and mortification expressed in other forms in mainstream society. Hence terrorism is "caused" by the very nature of humanity as <u>homo symbolicum</u>, and media coverage results because the dramatic nature of the events is consistent with news organizations' standards of newsworthiness.[66]

I am not arguing that political terrorists do not derive some personal satisfaction from manipulating the media or from their sudden fame. But, I am arguing that these are serendipitous benefits to actions taken as the result of the most powerful motives known to humanity--the motives Burke calls "Order" and "Kill."[67] The power of these motives arises from their elemental nature as part of the essence

of humanity. The need for order gives rise to the need for victimage/mortification, and this need motivates terrorist violence.

The explanation offered here is more elegant than the causal view of the terrorism-media relationship. The causal view requires a number of counter-intuitive and arguably false assumptions be made about either the terrorists themselves or the impact of mediated violence and persuasive messages. Further, the approach offered here provides a clear statement of the motives driving terrorism and offers the hope of doing something about it. For, if terrorism is an expressive act, its solution may lie in finding alternative means of expression.

Media Criticism as Social Action

The constant barrage of criticism aimed at the news media as they cover terrorism seems inexplicable given the lack of any evidence that media coverage does anything positive for terrorists. However, if we look at such criticism as social acts of victimage and mortification, it becomes explicable.

The news media are part of the larger society, but each journalistic organization is a miniature society within a society. The "brotherhood of journalists" is a society, within the larger society just as "newspaper reporters" are a society within the "brotherhood of journalists" and the staff of a single newspaper forms a society within the "newspaper reporters" society.

Burke's explanation of humans' inability to keep commandments includes the realization that people cannot follow commandments because many of the commandments operating in a society conflict with other

commandments, particularly as persons belong to smaller societies within the larger society. One commandment of our society is that the families of the recently deceased should be treated with respect and decency. But this conflicts with the commandment that a newsperson always gets his/her story no matter what the cost. Another commandment of our society is that criminals and lunatics should not be given access to the coveted airwaves or front pages--these are the domain of government leaders and prestigious persons in society. But this conflicts with the standards of newsworthiness that journalists use in selecting and doing news (an American television network's recent secret interview with Abu Nidal, for example, led to a great furor when the network refused to disclose his whereabouts).

The result of these conflicts is that the leaders assigned by society to defend and uphold the non-journalistic principles in conflict respond by victimizing the journalists for their coverage by calling them names, threatening them with legislative changes, and otherwise slapping their hands.

Within the "brotherhood of journalists" one can find a great deal of mortification going on in the form of public breast-beatings over the nature, extent, and form of media coverage of news. The television networks do news specials debating their coverage, the newspapers attack television reporters' excesses, and public television holds round-table discussions of the excesses of its commercial counterparts.

All of this criticism comes about because the behavior of journalists--while usually consistent with the principles of order under which journalism is conducted--violates sacred principles deemed

essential to the survival of the greater society of which they are a part. While I originally had planned to do a rhetorical analysis of some of this endless self-criticism and of external criticism using the Burkean approach, the length of this paper precludes me from doing so. Instead, I will be doing so in a paper that I will be presenting in February.

The promise of this line of research is that it explains the prevalence of media-bashing despite the lack of any evidence that media coverage actually does any harm to society or good for terrorists. The media are scapegoats for the existing social order's inability to keep the peace--a very important symbol of the social order. The media are also the victims of the need for mortification and victimage which arises from the conflicting commandments offered by the larger society and its parts. Finally, the media are required to be scapegoats for the Guilt that the audience feels for attending to the media as journalists violate important commandments of the existing social order.

Conclusions

As a theory of terrorism, the approach provided here is beneficial because it provides what a good theory ought to provide. That is, it allows us to understand terrorism, to predict the forms in which terrorism will appear, and it offers promise of allowing us to someday control terrorism.

We understand terrorism because we know that it is not a unique form of behavior. Rather, it is a species of the genus of human social action and explicable as such. We can predict terrorism to the extent

that when people reject an existing social order to establish one that rejects the existing symbols and principles of order we know that they will engage in victimage and mortification of the sort found in terrorism throughout the centuries. We cannot control terrorism, but knowledge of the purposes it serves provides hope that we might learn to avoid the radical estrangements that necessitate this violence, or at least to find other forms for radicals' expressions of order.

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